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which he advocates be deemed advisable, we should regard the Southern Downy Woodpecker as the true *Dryobates pubescens* (Linn.), calling the bird of the middle region *Dryobates pubescens medianus* (Sw.) and that of northern British America *Dryobates pubescens nelsoni* Oberholser. The alternative would be to adopt Swainson's arrangement *in toto*, for if not applicable to the southern form the name *pubescens* is subspecifically indeterminate and Swainson was within his rights in restricting it to the Downy Woodpecker of the far north and in bestowing new names on the other two birds.

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#### FOURTEENTH CONGRESS OF THE AMERICAN ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION.

THE FOURTEENTH CONGRESS of the American Ornithologists' Union convened in Cambridge, Mass., Monday evening, November 9, 1896. The business meeting was held at the residence of Mr. Charles F. Batchelder. The public sessions, lasting three days, were held in the Nash Lecture-room of the University Museum, commencing Tuesday, November 10.

BUSINESS SESSION.—The meeting was called to order by the President, Mr. William Brewster. Thirteen Active Members were present. The Secretary's report gave the membership of the Union at the opening of the present Congress as 673, constituted as follows: Active, 47; Honorary, 19; Corresponding, 67; Associate 540.

During the year the Union lost seventy-two members,—seven by death, fifteen by resignation, and fifty were dropped for non-payment of dues. The members lost by death were Henry Seebohm,<sup>1</sup> an Honorary Member, who died in London, England, November 26, 1895, aged 63 years; Dr. Juan Gundlach,<sup>2</sup> who died in Havana, Cuba, March 14, 1896, at the age of 85, also an

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<sup>1</sup> For an obituary notice, see Auk, XIII, 1896, pp. 96-97.

<sup>2</sup> For an obituary notice, see *Ibid.*, p. 267.

Honorary Member; and Thomas Lyttleton,<sup>1</sup> Lord Lilford, late President of the British Ornithologists' Union, a Corresponding Member, who died at Lilford Hall, Oundle, Northamptonshire, England, June 17, 1896, aged 63 years. Also the following Associates: Dr. Willard L. Maris,<sup>2</sup> who died in Philadelphia, Dec. 11, 1895; Clarence A. Smith,<sup>3</sup> who died in New York City, May 6, 1896, aged 22; Howard Gardiner Nichols,<sup>4</sup> who died in Atlanta, Ga., June 23, 1896, aged 25; and Eugene C. Thurber,<sup>5</sup> who died at Alhambra, Calif., September 6, 1896, aged 31.

The report of the Treasurer showed the finances of the Union to be in good condition.

The Amendments to the By-Laws proposed at the Thirteenth Congress were considered; part were adopted and part rejected.<sup>6</sup>

An election of officers was then held under the provisions of the change in the By-Laws making the Ex-Presidents of the Union Councillors. This required the election of three new members to the Council. The officers of the previous year were all re-elected with Mr. Chas. B. Cory, and Drs. Jonathan Dwight, Jr., and L. Stejneger as new members of the Council. Dr. Walter Faxon, of Cambridge, Mass., was elected an Active Member, and seventy-eight new members were added to the list of Associates. The usual reports of Standing Committees were received.

PUBLIC SESSION. *First Day*.—The meeting was called to order by the President, Mr. Brewster. An address of welcome was made by Dr. Geo. L. Goodale, on behalf of Harvard University.

Mr. William Dutcher, Chairman of the 'Committee on Protection of North American Birds,' then read the report of his committee for the past year. The report is published in full in this number of 'The Auk' (pp. 21-32), and will be reprinted as a separate pamphlet.

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<sup>1</sup> For an obituary notice, see *Auk*, XIII, p. 348.

<sup>2</sup> For an obituary notice, see *Ibid.*, p. 193.

<sup>3</sup> For an obituary notice, see *Ibid.*, pp. 267-268.

<sup>4</sup> For an obituary notice, see *Ibid.*, XIV, Jan. 1897, under 'Notes and News.'

<sup>5</sup> For an obituary notice, see *Ibid.*, XIII, p. 349.

<sup>6</sup> See under the department of 'Notes and News' in the present number of 'The Auk.'

The Union was honored by the presence of Miss Maria R. Audubon, granddaughter of the renowned naturalist. In her behalf Dr. Elliott Coues exhibited some recently discovered manuscript journals of John James Audubon, including the one giving an account of his famous trip up the Missouri River. A vote of thanks was tendered Miss Audubon for her kindness in allowing the manuscripts to be seen.

Under the title 'Ornithological Publications, Present and Prospective,' Dr. Coues laid before the Union an advance copy of 'Papers presented to the World's Congress on Ornithology,' of which he was the responsible editor. He also stated that he was engaged in the preparation of a new edition of his 'Key to North American Birds,' and in conjunction with a well known author was writing a bird-book for beginners.

Mr. Louis Agassiz Fuertes exhibited and explained a collection of his own unpublished drawings of birds, made from life.

The opening paper of the afternoon session was by Mr. Frank M. Chapman, entitled 'An Ornithological Tour in Yucatan.' The members and visitors repaired to the Geological Room of the University Museum where lantern slides illustrating this paper were shown.

The second title was 'Some New England Birds' Nests,' by Mr. William Brewster. He illustrated his paper with lantern slides from original photographs. Remarks followed by Messrs. Chapman, Bent, Chamberlain, Clark, Batchelder, and Rev. H. K. Job.

*Second Day.*—The meeting was called to order by the President, Mr. Brewster.

The reading of scientific papers began with one by Dr. Jonathan Dwight, Jr., on 'The Philadelphia Vireo (*Vireo philadelphicus*).' Remarks followed by Mr. Bradford Torrey, Dr. Coues, the Chair, and the author.

The next paper was by the same author on 'The Molt of the Song Sparrow (*Melospiza fasciata*), and of the Red-eyed Vireo (*Vireo olivaceus*).' Remarks followed by Messrs. F. H. Kennard, Frank M. Chapman, the Chair, and the author.

The third title of the morning was 'Notes on the Black Rail (*Porzana jamaicensis*) in Southern Connecticut,' by Judge John N. Clark. Remarks followed by Messrs. Torrey and Deane, the Chair, and the author.

Some bird-drawings, the work of Mr. Ernest E. Thompson, were shown by Mr. Frank M. Chapman.

A vote of thanks was given Mr. Dutcher for the admirable manner in which his accounts with the Union had been kept during his long service as Treasurer.

The feature of the afternoon session was the open-air talk by Mr. Abbott H. Thayer, demonstrating his theory of the principles of protective coloration. Mr. Thayer placed three sweet potatoes, or objects of corresponding shape and size, horizontally on a wire a few inches above the ground. They were covered with some sticky material, and dry earth from the road on which they stood was sprinkled over them so that they would be the same color as the background. The two end ones were then painted white on the under side, and the white color was shaded up and gradually mixed with the brown of the sides. When viewed from a little distance these two end ones, which were white below, disappeared from sight, while the middle one stood out in strong relief and appeared much darker than it really was. Mr. Thayer explained that terrestrial birds and mammals which are protectively colored have the under parts white or very light in color, and that the color of the under parts usually shades gradually into that of the upper parts. This is essential in order to counteract the effect of the shadow, which otherwise, as shown by the middle potato, makes the object abnormally conspicuous and causes it to appear much darker than it really is. In the case of Mr. Thayer's experiment some of the witnesses could hardly believe that the striking difference in the visibility of the three potatoes was entirely due to the coloring of the under side, and Mr. Thayer was asked to color the middle one like the two others in order that the effect might be observed. Mr. Thayer complied with the request, painting the under side of the middle potato white, and shading the white up into the sides as in the case of the others. The effect was almost magical. The middle potato at once disappeared from view. A similar experiment was tried on the lawn. Two potatoes were painted green to resemble the green of the grass above which they were suspended. One was painted white on the under side and at once became invisible when viewed from a little distance, while the other showed plainly and seemed very dark, the shadow, superadded to the green of

the under side, making it remarkably conspicuous. The experiments were an overwhelming success. Discussion followed (in the Nash Lecture-room) by Drs. Merriam, Coues and Allen, Messrs. Phelps, Chapman and Fuertes, the Chair, and the author. The thanks of the Union were tendered Mr. Thayer.

*Third Day.*—The meeting was called to order by the President, Mr. Brewster. Before proceeding to the reading of papers, resolutions were adopted thanking Prof. Geo. L. Goodale, and the Geological Department of Harvard University for the use of their respective lecture-rooms for a place of meeting, and for other courtesies tendered to the Union; and to the Nuttall Ornithological Club for the cordial welcome and generous hospitalities extended to visiting members.

The first paper of the morning was by Dr. C. Hart Merriam, who spoke informally about some of the birds of Oregon.

Mr. Brewster then exhibited a series of Redpolls, and talked in an informal way about 'Two Curious Birds Nests.'

The opening paper of the afternoon was 'On the Terns of Penikese Island, Massachusetts,' by Geo. H. Mackay. It was read by Mr. Reginald Heber Howe, Jr. Remarks followed by Messrs. Fuertes, Dutcher, Howe, the Chair, and the author.

Mr. Edward H. Forbush, Field Director of the Massachusetts Gypsy Moth Commission, asked for information and suggestions regarding the advisability of introducing into the United States foreign birds that feed upon the eggs of the gypsy moth. It was the opinion of those who discussed the matter that such a scheme would be impracticable.

Owing to the lack of time for their presentation in full the following papers were read by title:

'The Fringillidæ of Dodge County, Wisconsin,' by Will Edwin Snyder.

'Some Notes on the Nesting Habits of the White-tailed Kite (*Elanus leucurus*). With exhibition of eggs,' by Chester Barlow.

'On the Terns of Muskeget Island, Massachusetts,' by George H. Mackay.

The Union then adjourned to meet at the American Museum of Natural History, New York City, November 8, 1897.

INO. H. SAGE, *Secretary.*

*Portland, Conn., Nov. 30, 1896.*